Caro Maria,

Ciao from America! I have finally made it over the great Atlantic Ocean after twelve exasperating days aboard the most disgusting of ships. The boat was crowded, dirty, uncomfortable and loud. Dreams of the wonderful opportunities we would find in America kept our morals high. Finally, the steamship docked in “The Island of Tears”, as many call Ellis Island. They made all of us strip off our clothes for an examination of some sort. I was scared and confused when they started asking me harsh questions in another dialect of the Italian I understand. Luckily, I answered these questions correctly and in the manner that the Americans approved of.

I am living with four other young, Italian men in one tiny room within a large building. Yes, it is cramped, but what was I supposed to do? I came to America with nothing but one bag carrying my most important items. It would give me great pleasure to escape this rodent infested dump, but this is all I can afford right now. Our building is located on the corner of the piazza of our “Little Italy”. The entire neighborhood is made up of Italian immigrants, just like me. We meet in the piazza at the end of the day, talk about our lives, reminisce about our wonderful Italy, and share stories. Talking with other Italians that are in the same position as me lifts my mood each day. I wouldn’t say that Americans are evil, but they can definitely be hurtful. They make me feel dumb just for being Italian!

I am helping out a shoemaking business two blocks down from my building. A nice, old Italian man named Gianni runs the shop and is extremely successful. I hope to follow in his footsteps someday. Twenty years ago, he made the voyage to America solo, just as I did a few weeks ago. Also like me, Gianni expected to stay in America only until he made enough money to move back to Italy and start a new business of his own. But the wonders of a new world struck him off guard, and Gianni fell in love with his new life in America. He wrote home, speaking brilliantly of his newfound love, and begged his family to immigrate. By the next year, his whole family was living in our Little Italy in America.

Although I’m making little to no money as an assistant, I’m still making more than I did back in Italy as a farmer. Has the phylloxera cleared from the vineyards? The rumors are true; the opportunities are endless in America. I think I might really like it here, and I think you would love it too. Your expertise in the kitchen would help you tremendously, as Italian cuisine is increasingly becoming popular amongst American citizens. Italian immigrant cooks are trying out new forms of old favorites to satisfy American eating habits. Although our true Italian food is much better, I must say that the “Italian-American” cuisine is mighty delicious! Just a thought…

I’m sending home two dollars from my savings to you and Mama. Please do not feel bad, for every day I am here I cannot help but think of the suffering you are enduring in Italy. I miss you terribly and hope to see you soon.

Con tanto amore,

Luca



Figure : Little Italy by Maddie Thornton

***Citations:***

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